



ONCE UPON A TIME AT THE END OF THE WORLD™

JASON AARON

ALEXANDRE TEFENKGI

LEE LOUGHRIDGE



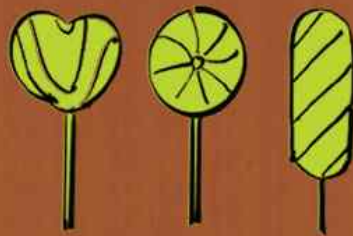
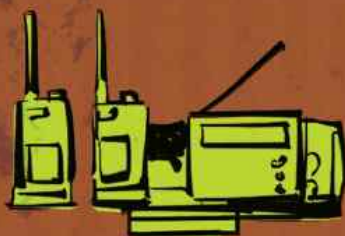
#4

BOOM!
STUDIOS



BOOK ONE

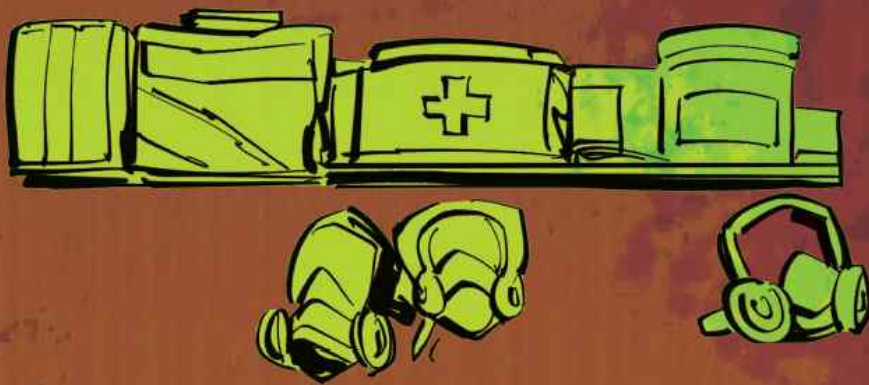
LOVE IN THE
WASTELAND



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CHAPTER FOUR

THE WILD,
THE WOKE,
AND THE
WASTELAND
RANGERS



MAIN COVER BY
MIKE DEL MUNDO

VARIANT COVERS BY
FRANY
MIKE DEL MUNDO
JORGE CORONA
WITH COLORS BY
SARAH STERN

WHATNOT EXCLUSIVE
VARIANT COVER BY
HELENA MASELLIS

*Please be advised,
this comic contains sensitive subject matters related to suicide.*

*If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, you can call the
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255. A caller is connected
to a certified crisis center near where the call is placed.
The call is free and confidential.*





It was just a *kiss*.

A spontaneous flicker of intimacy between friends.

Mezzy thought she tasted like *peppermint*.

Or what she imagined peppermint must have tasted like when it existed.

One of the boys saw the kiss and told the *Chieftess*. Jennie was older, so she was blamed for leading Mezzy astray.

Mezzy's penance consisted of six weeks latrine duty and night watch, while Jennie would have to publicly renew her vow to the Rangers and their all-sacred social order.



With a *swim*.

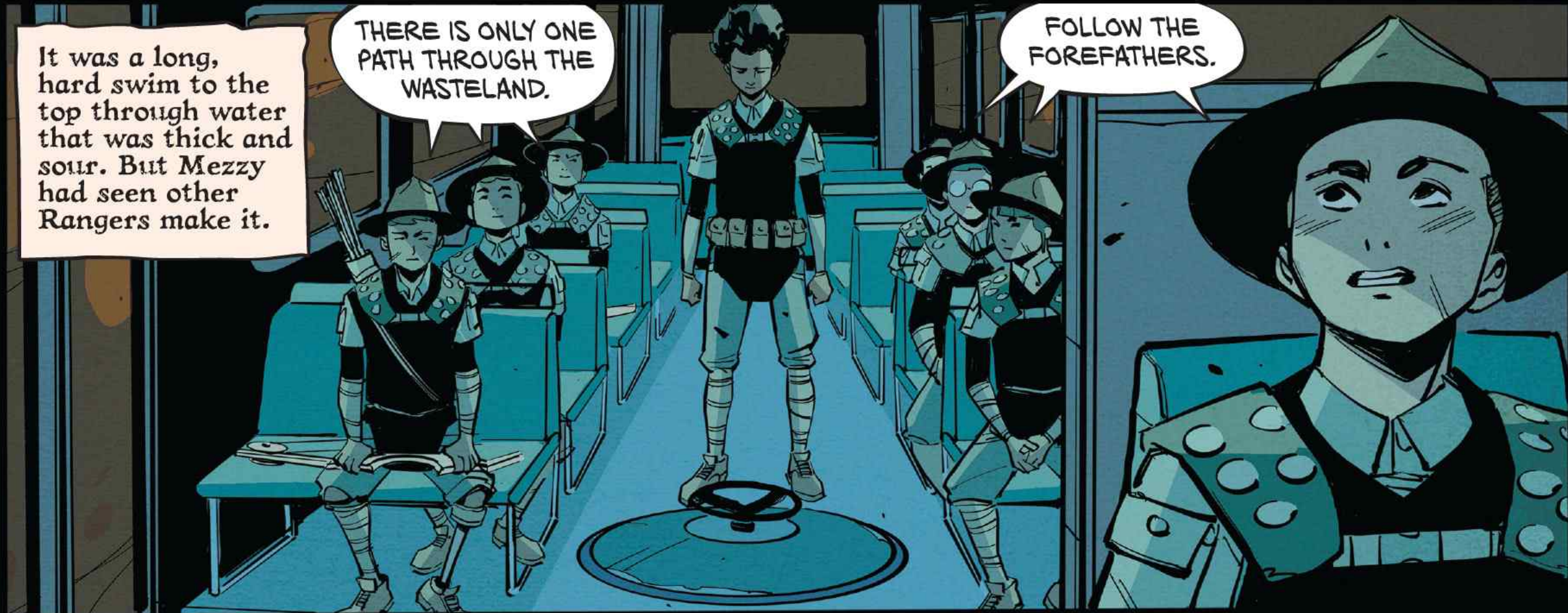
THIS IS IT.



That meant a ride
in the *submabus* to
the bottom of *Black
Gold Lagoon*.

THERE IS
ONLY ONE
PATH.

TIME
TO GET BACK
ON IT, RANGER
JENNIE.



It was a long,
hard swim to the
top through water
that was thick and
sour. But Mezzy
had seen other
Rangers make it.

THERE IS ONLY ONE
PATH THROUGH THE
WASTELAND.

FOLLOW THE
FOREFATHERS.



The boy named *Daniel*
after he'd been caught
wetting himself at
night with tears.

The girl *Cassandra* who was
overheard using fourteen of
the forty-seven forbidden
words while burning the
latrine barrels.



Jennie was a good
swimmer. One of the
best in the fort. She
would have made it.

OPEN
IT.

If she
had *tried*.



WHAT'S
SHE DOING?
WHY ISN'T SHE
SWIMMING?

WHY
ISN'T YOUR
GIRLFRIEND
SWIMMING,
MEZZY?

HEH.
MEZZY THE
LEZZY.



They used to *joke*
about how they
would do it.

At least, Mezzzy
thought they
were jokes.

Daniel hung himself from the walls of the fort. Cassandra slit her wrists so deep her hands flapped like crimson flags.



Jennie said those ways weren't *grand* enough for the two of them.



"We should set the fort on *fire*," she giggled.



I'M SORRY.



"And stand atop it as the whole shithouse burns... laughing, kissing...

JENNIE

"...touching each other's *butts*."



MEZZY...

DON'T...GO TO THE...

...OASIS.

Her name was Jennie Suzanne. A fully-badged Beta Scout in the Wasteland Rangers.

She enjoyed fishing and chasing radioactive frogs and secretly painting silly faces on rocks.



Her kisses
tasted like
peppermint.





"WE FOUND THEIR
CAMP. COALS STILL
WARM. SHE MUST
BE CLOSE."



ALPHA AND
BETA SCOUTS ARE
SEARCHING FOR HER
TRAIL. EVERY ONE OF
THEM HAS THEIR
MERIT BADGE IN
MANHUNTING.

GAMMA
AND DELTA SCOUTS
SET TRAPS AROUND THE
PERIMETER. SNARES
AND PUNJI PITS. IN CASE
SHE'S CRAZY ENOUGH
TO COME BACK FOR
HER PET.



"IN CASE SHE'S COMPLETELY
FORSAKEN ALL THE TENETS
OF THE BOOK."

Before yesterday--before the
man with his guts dragging
behind him--if you'd asked
Ranger Mezzy...

...she'd have said the
only time she ever
killed someone... had
been with a kiss.



But she would
have to kill
for Maceo.

She would
have to kill
a lot.





EZMERELDA!



I'VE GIVEN THE ORDER THAT YOU'RE **NOT** TO BE HARMED!

YOU HAVE **BETRAYED** YOUR BROTHER RANGERS! AND EVERY TENET OF THE FOREFATHERS! BUT WE ARE STILL **OFFERING** YOU THE CHANCE TO **RETURN** TO THE ONE TRUE PATH!

BY RETURNING THE BOOK! AND LEADING US TO THE OASIS!



DO YOUR DUTY AND YOUR...**FRIEND**...WILL BE RELEASED BACK INTO THE WASTELAND WHERE HE BELONGS!

YOU HAVE MY WORD AS CHIEFTESS!



MEZZY?! DO YOU HEAR ME, RANGER?!



I'VE GOT FRESH TRACKS. SHE'S HEADED NORTHWEST.

SHE SMELLS SCARED.



"SHE'S **RUNNING!** WE'VE GOT HER NOW, RANGERS!"



LAST
NIGHT...I TRIED
COUNTING THE
STARS.



THINK
I MADE IT TO
3,730-SOMETHING
BEFORE I FELL
ASLEEP.

SO I SPENT
MOST OF TODAY
IN THE INVENTING
ROOM.

SCANNING...
SEVENTEEN
STARS.

SCANNING...
EIGHTEEN
STARS.

SCANNING...

MOM, DAD,
EVERY DAY THERE'S
JUST...THERE'S **SO**
MUCH TO DO. SO MANY
NEW INVENTIONS TO
INVENT. I...

I JUST CAN'T
WAIT TO BUILD
'EM ALL.



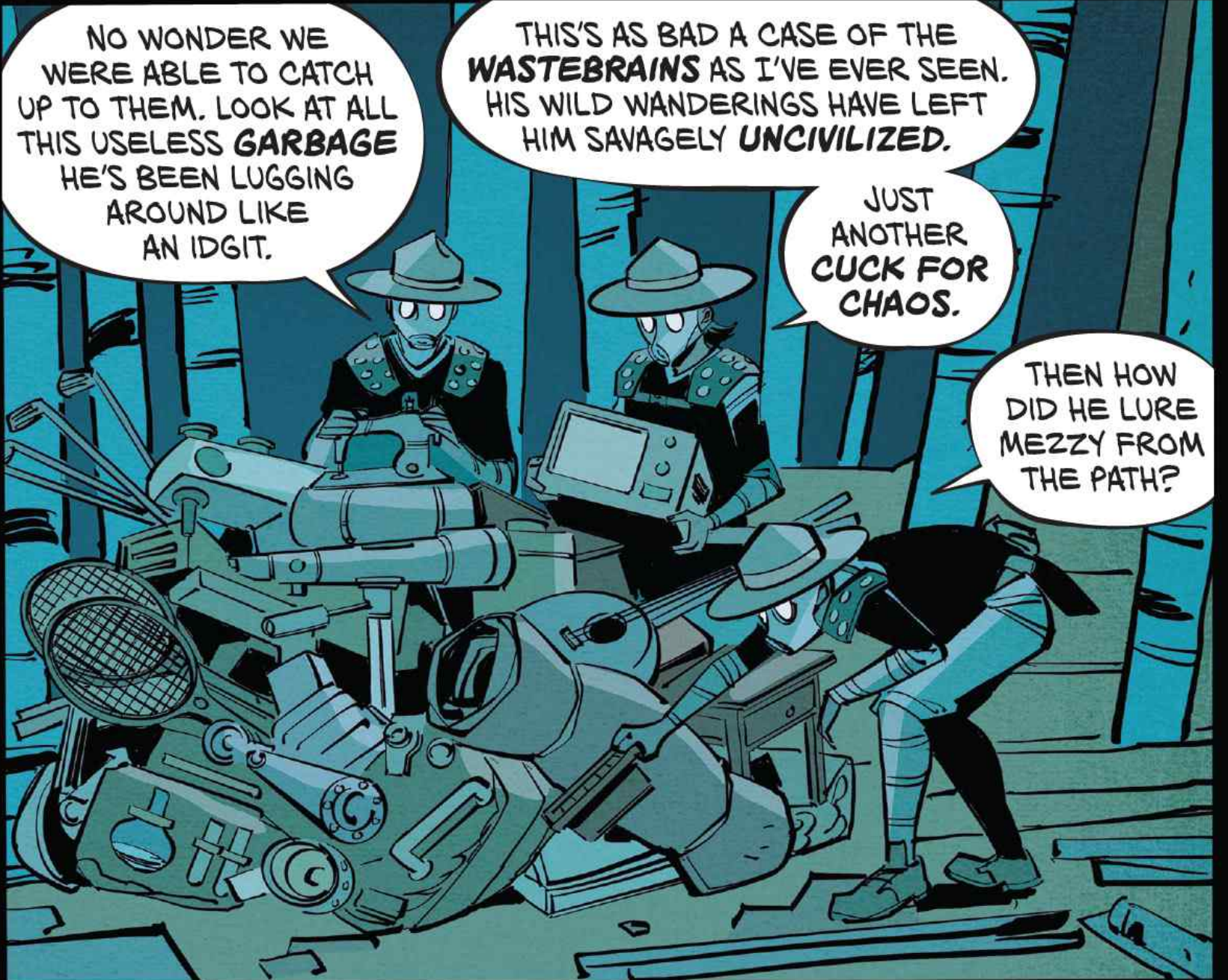
WISH
Y'ALL WERE
HERE.

THIS IS
MACEO.



SCANNING
FOR STARS--

CRRNCH



NO WONDER WE
WERE ABLE TO CATCH
UP TO THEM. LOOK AT ALL
THIS USELESS **GARBAGE**
HE'S BEEN LUGGING
AROUND LIKE
AN IDGIT.

THIS'S AS BAD A CASE OF THE
WASTEBRAINS AS I'VE EVER SEEN.
HIS WILD WANDERINGS HAVE LEFT
HIM SAVAGELY **UNCIVILIZED**.

JUST
ANOTHER
**CUCK FOR
CHAOS**.

THEN HOW
DID HE LURE
MEZZY FROM
THE PATH?



MIGHT
BE HE AIN'T AS
IDGITISH AS HE
SEEMS. WHAT
HE IS, BOYS...IS
A **TRAPPER**.

AND ALL THESE
LOONEY TANGLES
OF WASTELAND
TRASH, THEY'RE HIS
SUGAR JIGGERS
AND **VIRTUE
SIGNALERS**.

THESE
HERE ARE THE
WEAPONS OF THE
WILD AND THE
WOKE.



THEN LET'S SHOW THIS
WASTEHEAD WHAT IT
MEANS TO BE
CIVILIZED!

LET'S
BURN IT
ALL!





RANGER PATROLS ARE STILL SEARCHING, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE THEY'LL CATCH HER.

NOW THAT **YOU'RE** NOT THERE TO SLOW HER DOWN.



MEZZY. YOU MEAN MEZZY.

SHE'S... GONE?



WHATEVER TEMPTATION SHE MUST HAVE FELT, IT WOULD SEEM IT WORE OFF QUICKLY...

...ONCE THE **GUILT** OF WHAT SHE'D DONE CAUGHT UP WITH HER.

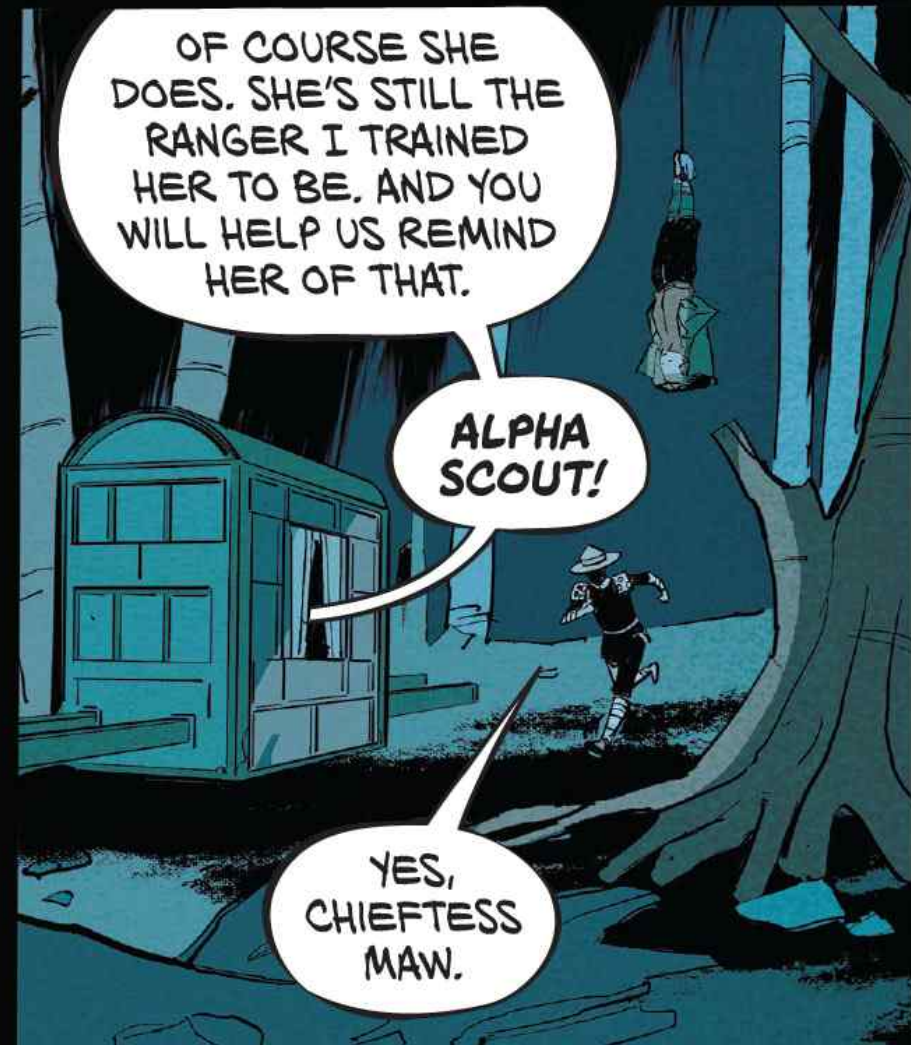
DID SHE TELL YOU WHAT SHE DID BEFORE SHE FLED? TO THAT POOR OLD **RANGER?**



YOU'RE... WHAT SHE WAS **RUNNING** FROM.

YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU WON'T CATCH HER.

SHE WALKS REALLY FAST.



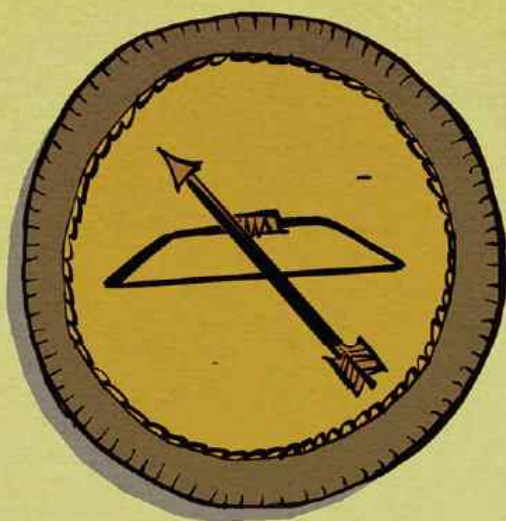
OF COURSE SHE DOES. SHE'S STILL THE RANGER I TRAINED HER TO BE. AND YOU WILL HELP US REMIND HER OF THAT.

ALPHA SCOUT!

YES, CHIEFTESS MAW.



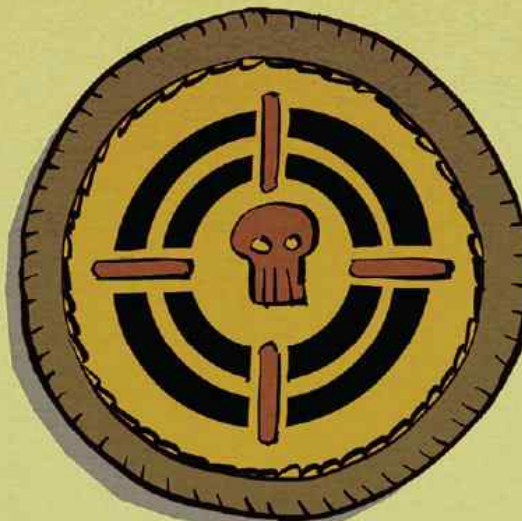
FETCH ME A RANGER WHO HAS HIS MERIT BADGE IN **TORTURE.**



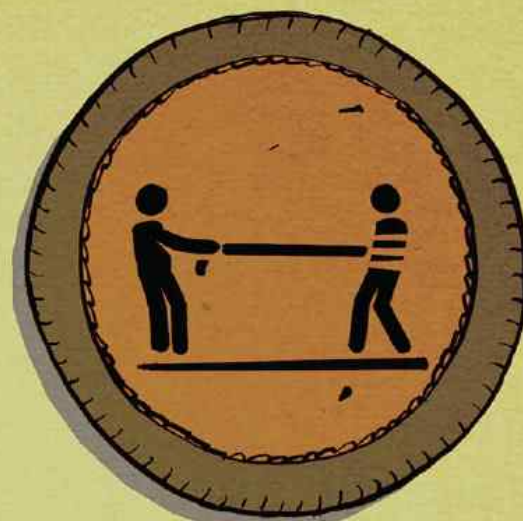
Archery.



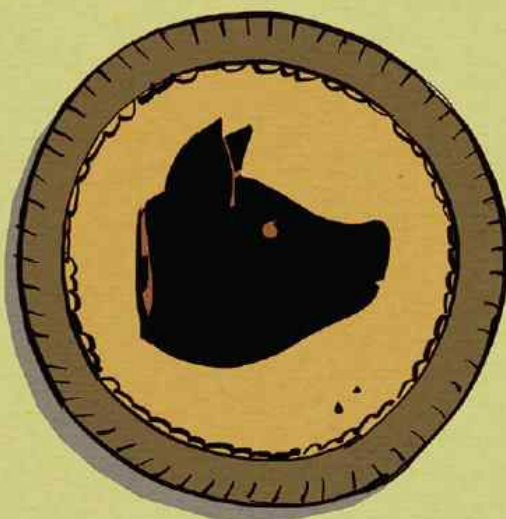
Woodworking.



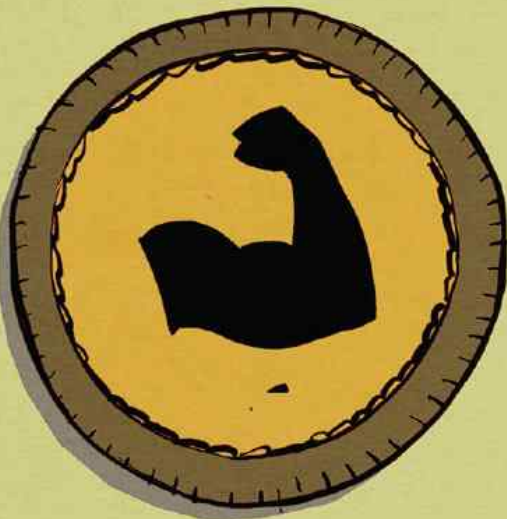
Manhunting.



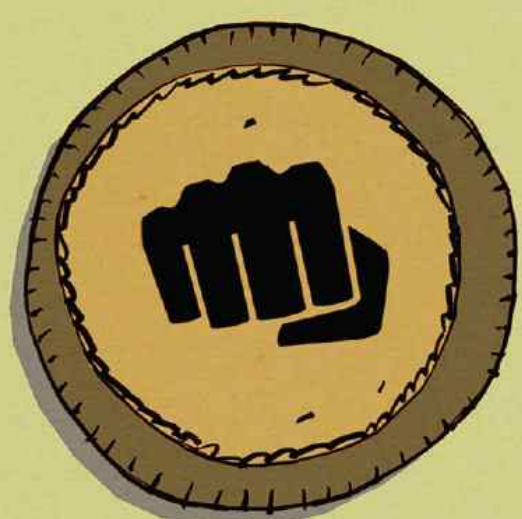
Manroping.



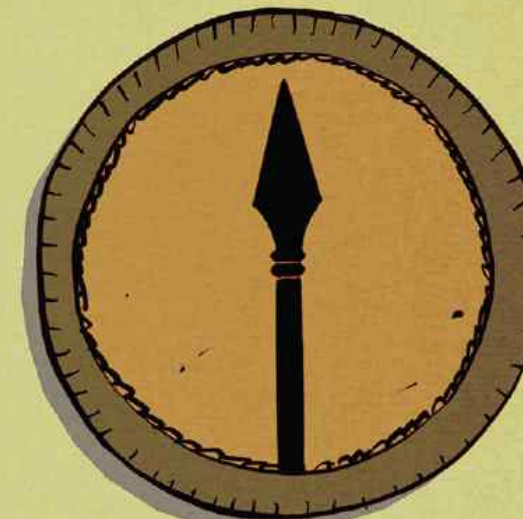
Butchery.



Personal Fitness.



Punching.



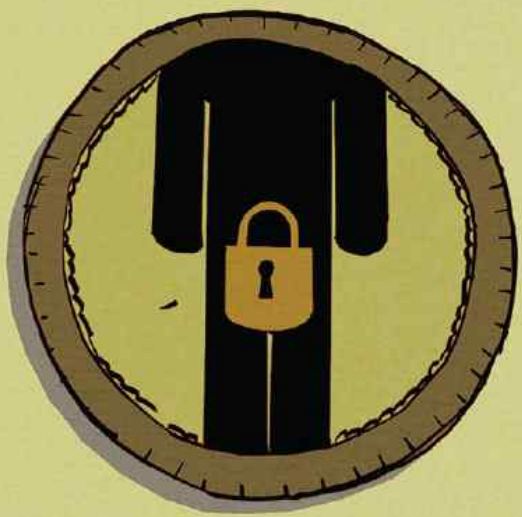
Spearing.



Excrucciation: Beginner.



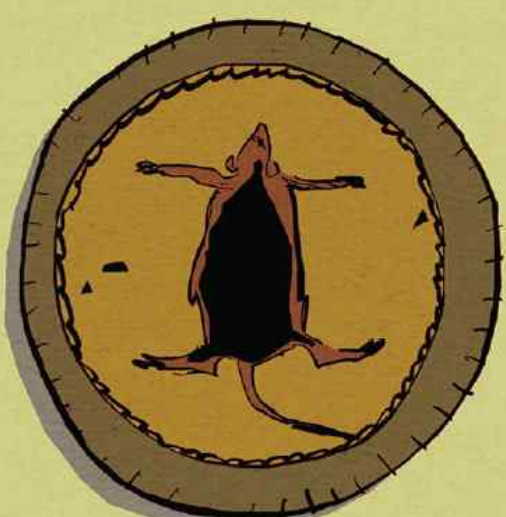
Torture: Advanced.



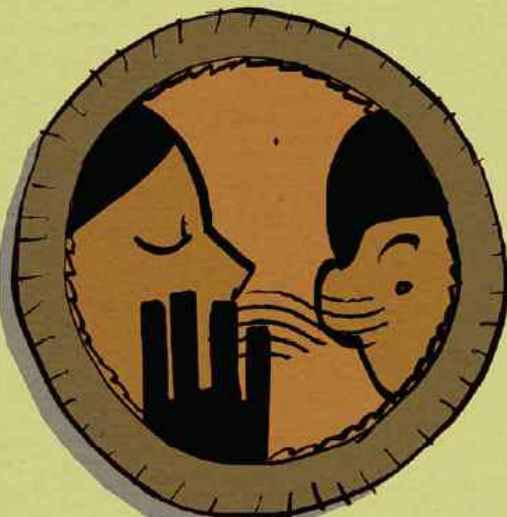
Excellence In
Self-Pleasure Abstinence.



Underwater Combat.



Skinning.



Snitching.



Chainsawing.



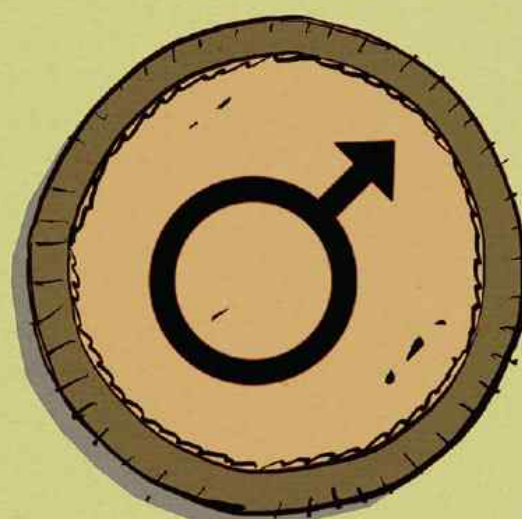
Curb Stomping.



Yodeling.



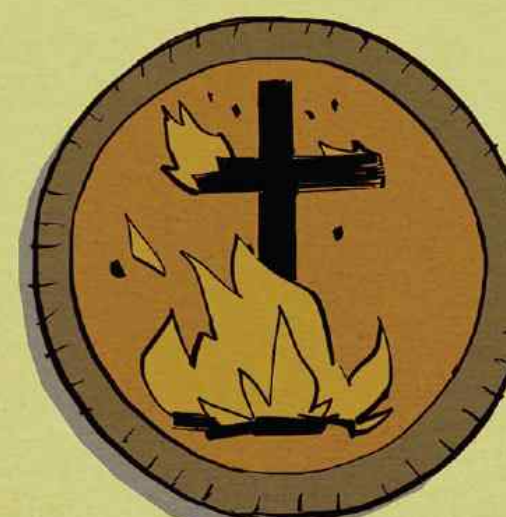
Civil Obedience.



Masculinity.



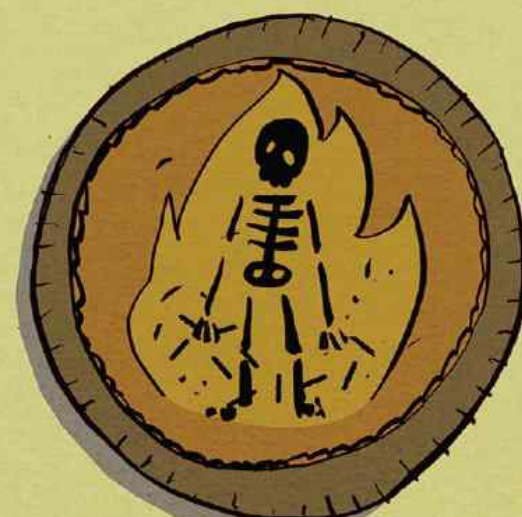
Overconfidence.



Religious Intolerance.



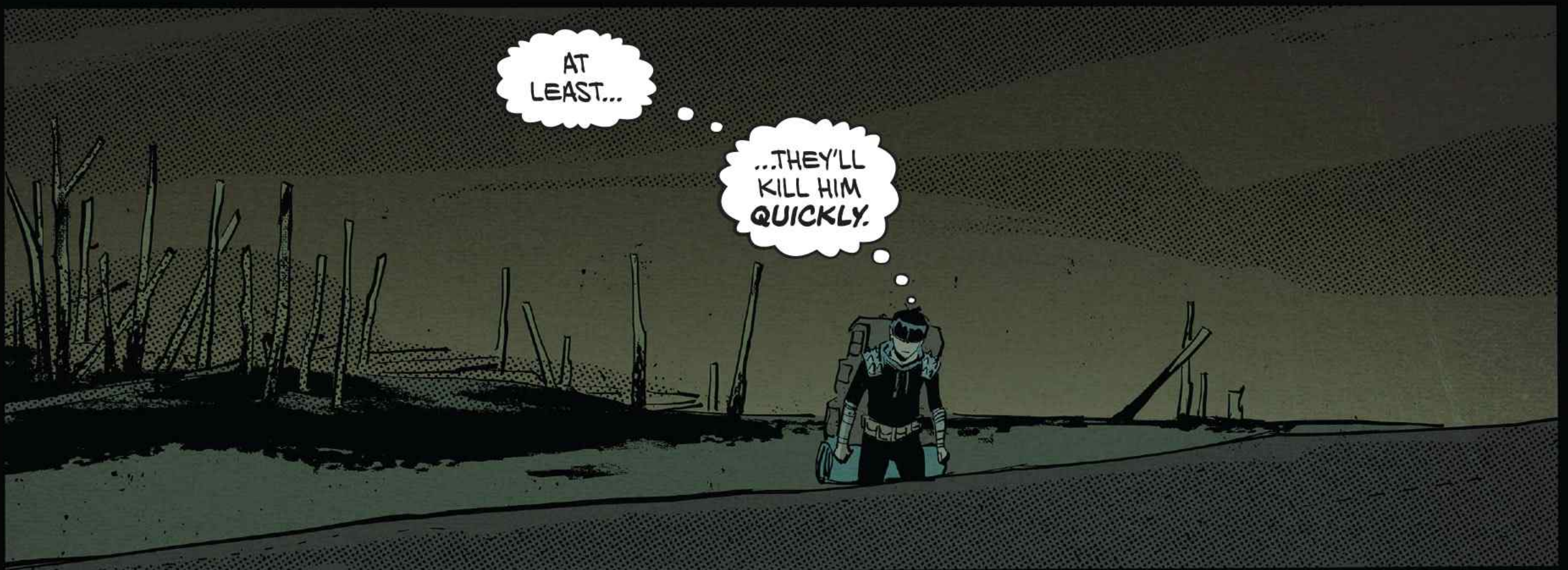
Fear And Intimidation.



Preparedness In The Face
Of Human Extinction.



Golf.



AT
LEAST...

...THEY'LL
KILL HIM
QUICKLY.



SOMEONE
WITH A BADGE
IN BUTCHERY
WILL DO IT.

HE'S...
PROBABLY
ALREADY
DEAD.



AAAAAARRRRRRGGGH!



EEEEHRRRRGGGH!

OH,
MACEO.

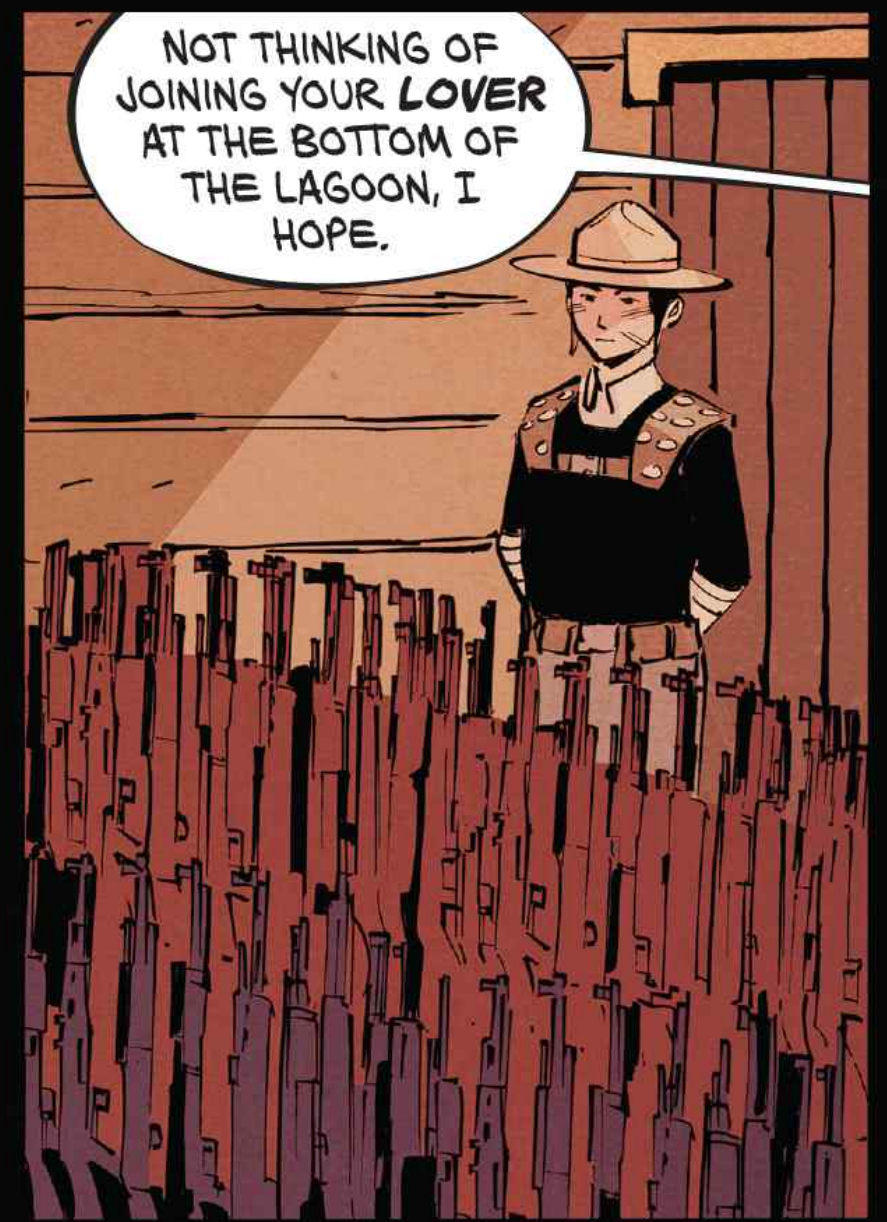
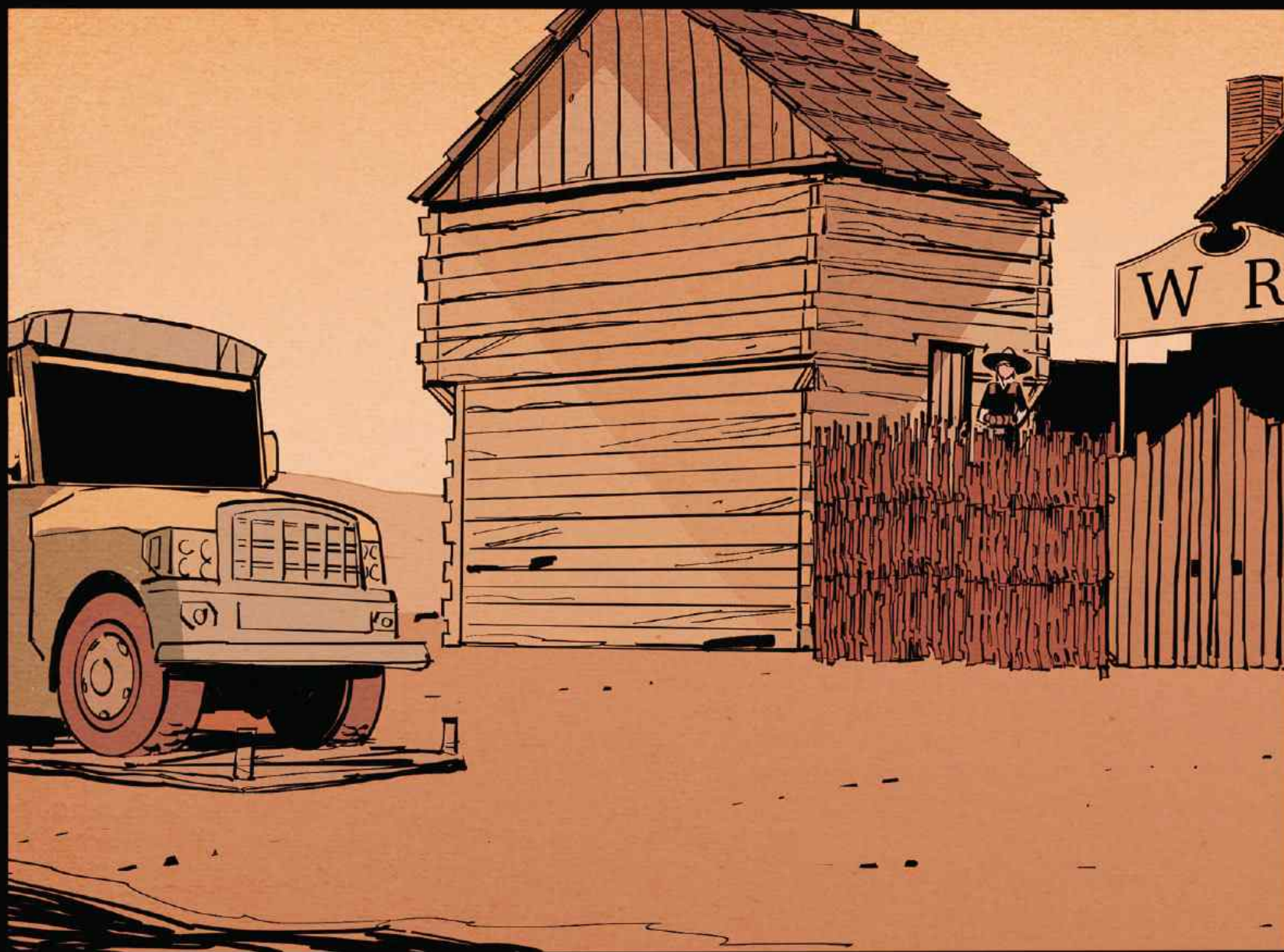


I'M
SORRY...



HHHRRRRRREEEGGGH!

I'M SORRY
YOU EVER
MET ME.



NOT THINKING OF JOINING YOUR **LOVER** AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LAGOON, I HOPE.



SHE WASN'T MY...

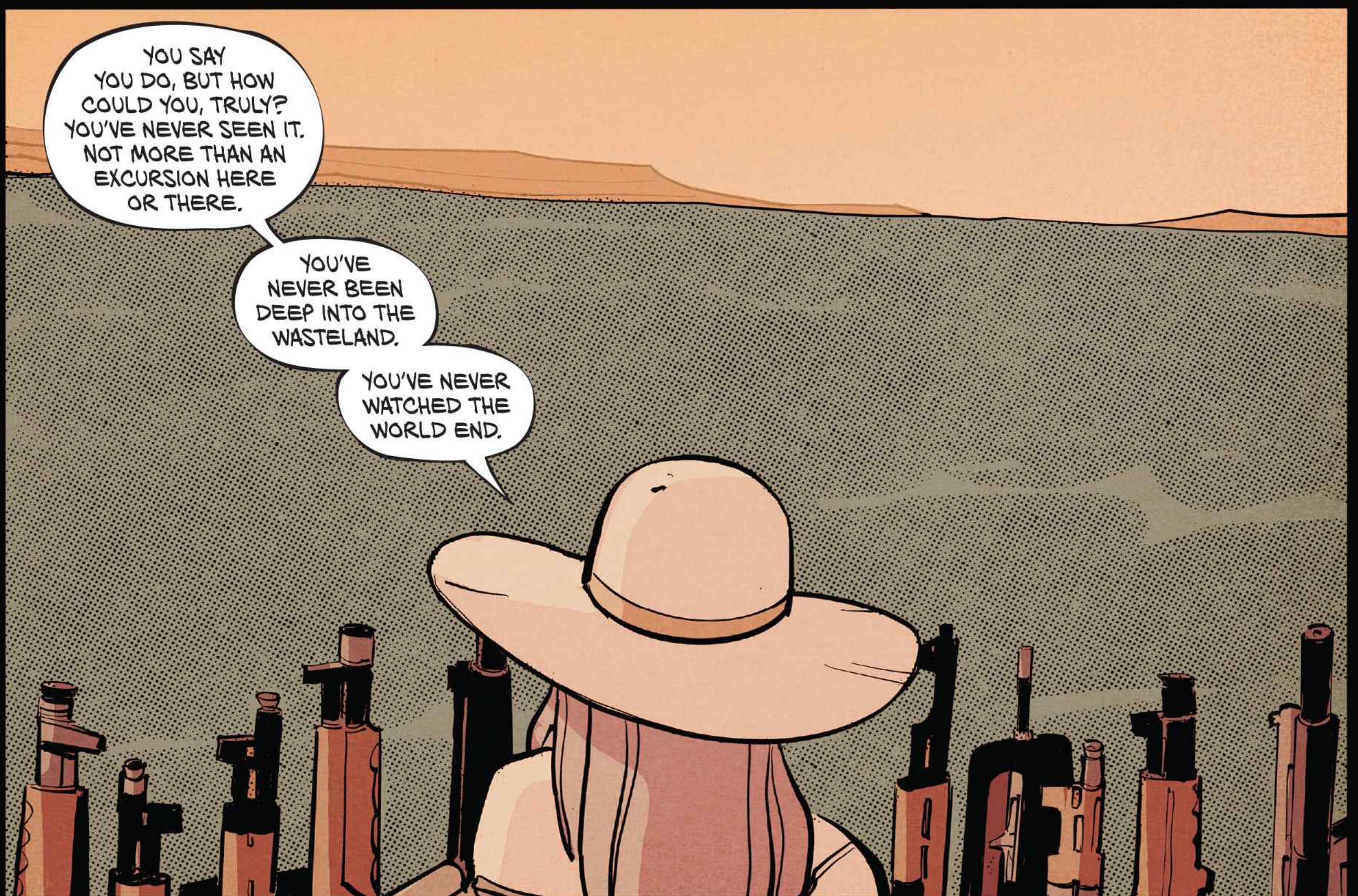
NO, CHIEFTESS MAW.

JENNIE WAS A FINE RANGER. BUT IN THE FACE OF UNCIVILIZATION, SHE FORGOT HER PRINCIPLES OF PREPAREDNESS.



SHE LET THE WASTELAND MAKE HER WEAK AND WILD. AND IT DID WHAT IT DOES. IT **CONSUMED** HER.

YES, MAW. THAT WHAT'S HAPPENS WHEN WE LOSE HOLD OF TRADITION. I UNDERSTAND.



YOU SAY YOU DO, BUT HOW COULD YOU, TRULY? YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT. NOT MORE THAN AN EXCURSION HERE OR THERE.

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN DEEP INTO THE WASTELAND.

YOU'VE NEVER WATCHED THE WORLD END.



IN A WORLD WITHOUT LAW, THERE IS NO LIVING. NO SURVIVING. THERE IS ONLY **WALLOWING**.

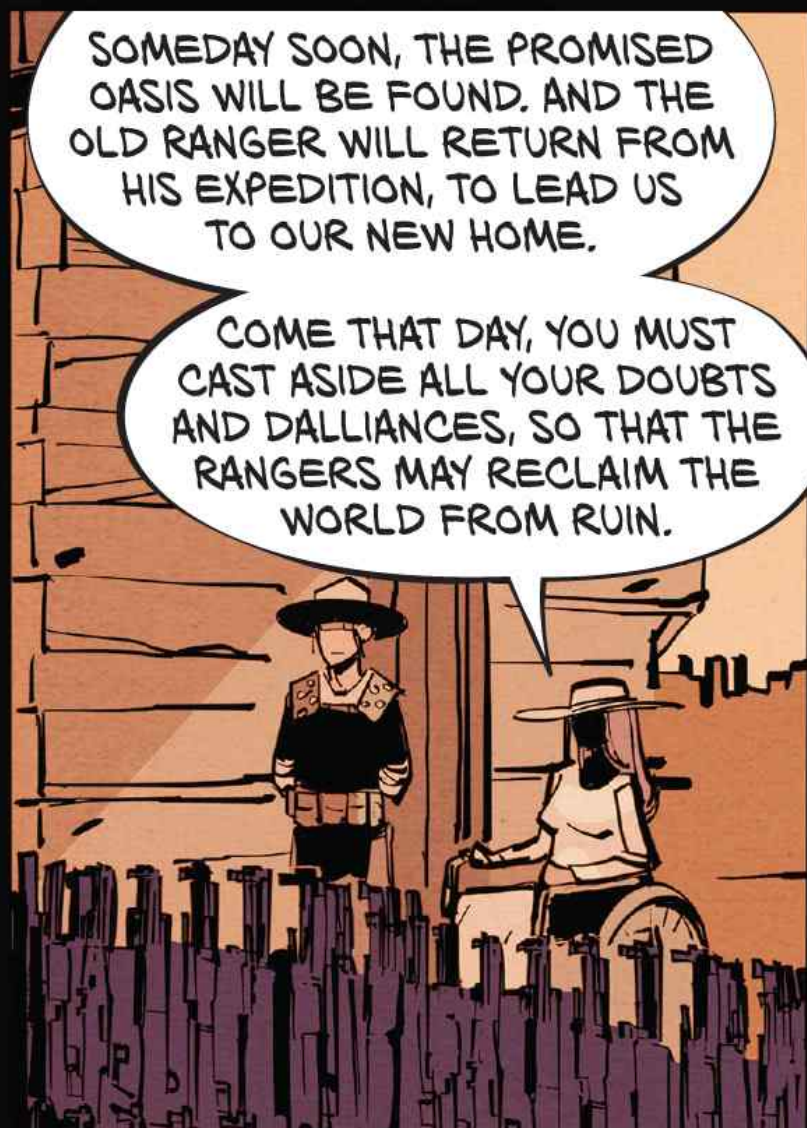
PIGS WALLOW. ARE WE PIGS, MEZZY?



NO, MAW, WE ARE NOT PIGS.

WE ARE WASTELAND RANGERS. WE CARRY THE TORCH FOR THE FIRST GREAT PREPPERS.

WE WALK THE PATH OF TRADITION AND CIVIL ORDER.



SOMEDAY SOON, THE PROMISED OASIS WILL BE FOUND. AND THE OLD RANGER WILL RETURN FROM HIS EXPEDITION, TO LEAD US TO OUR NEW HOME.

COME THAT DAY, YOU MUST CAST ASIDE ALL YOUR DOUBTS AND DALLIANCES, SO THAT THE RANGERS MAY RECLAIM THE WORLD FROM RUIN.



WHEN WE REACH THE OASIS...YOU WILL WALK THE PATH, EZMERELDA. WALK IT TO ITS FULLEST.

AND WHEN THE TIME COMES... YOU WILL TAKE MY PLACE AS **SCOUT MOTHER**.



YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY?

GO AHEAD, GIRL. YOU MAY SPEAK YOUR MIND.



IT...

IT WAS JUST A KISS.



SLAP
YOURSELF,
RANGER. AS
HARD AS
YOU CAN.



AND TELL
ME WHAT
RUINED THE
WORLD.

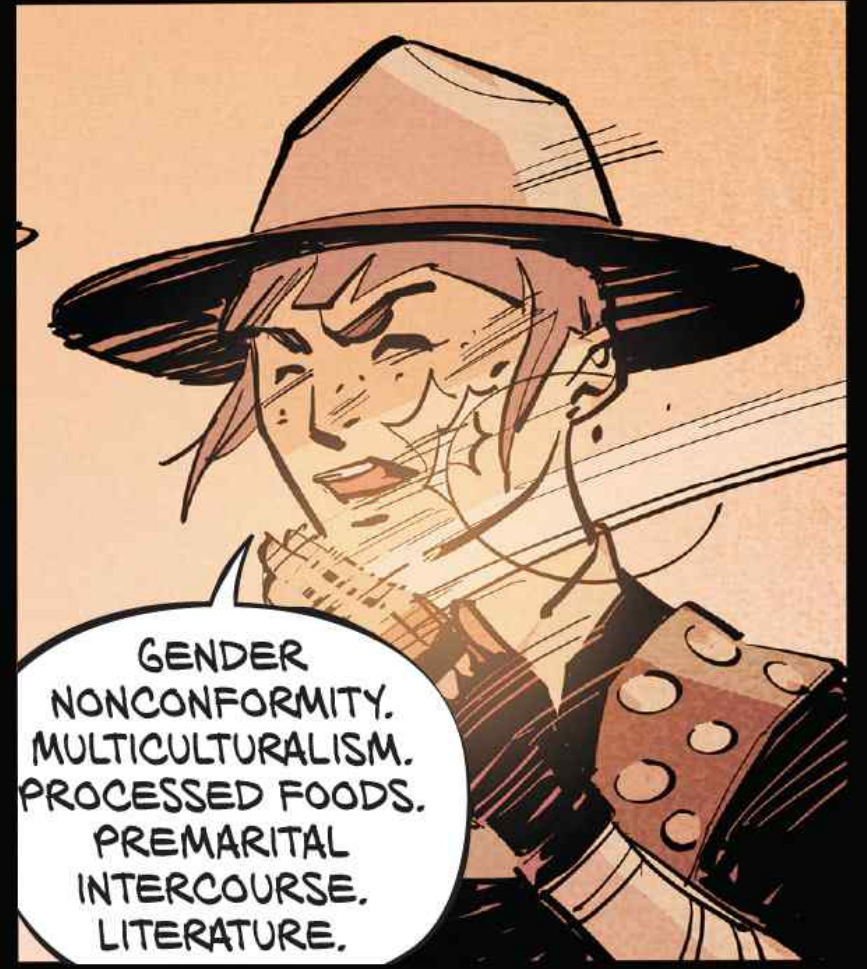


PROGRESS.



DIVERSITY.

INDECENCY.



GENDER
NONCONFORMITY.
MULTICULTURALISM.
PROCESSED FOODS.
PREMARITAL
INTERCOURSE.
LITERATURE.



YOU
FORGOT
CRYING.

GET BACK TO
YOUR WATCH,
RANGER.



Library
(for the only book
that matters).

Hallway Obstacle Course.

The Temple of the
Great Preppers.

Girl Barracks.

Boy Barracks.

Medical Facility
(pile of dirt to rub on wounds).

Communication Room
(rat-based messaging center).

Protein Room.

Latrine.

W R

Punching Room.

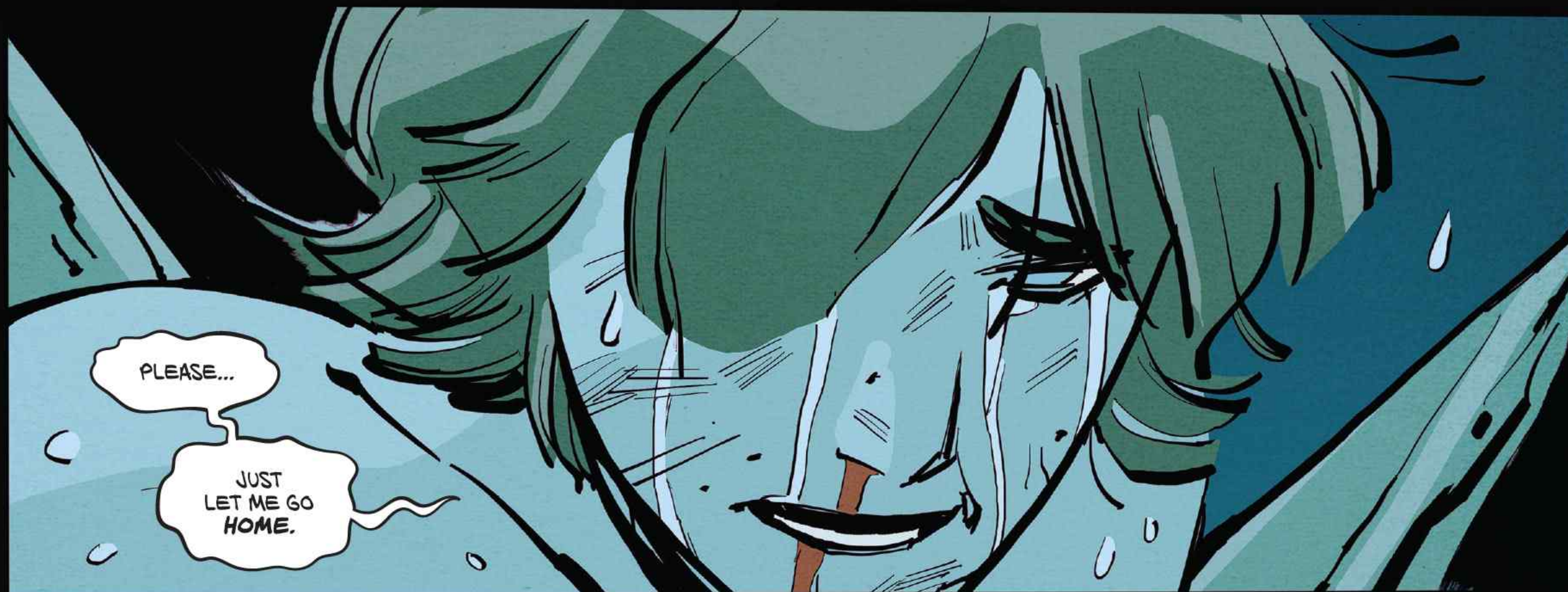
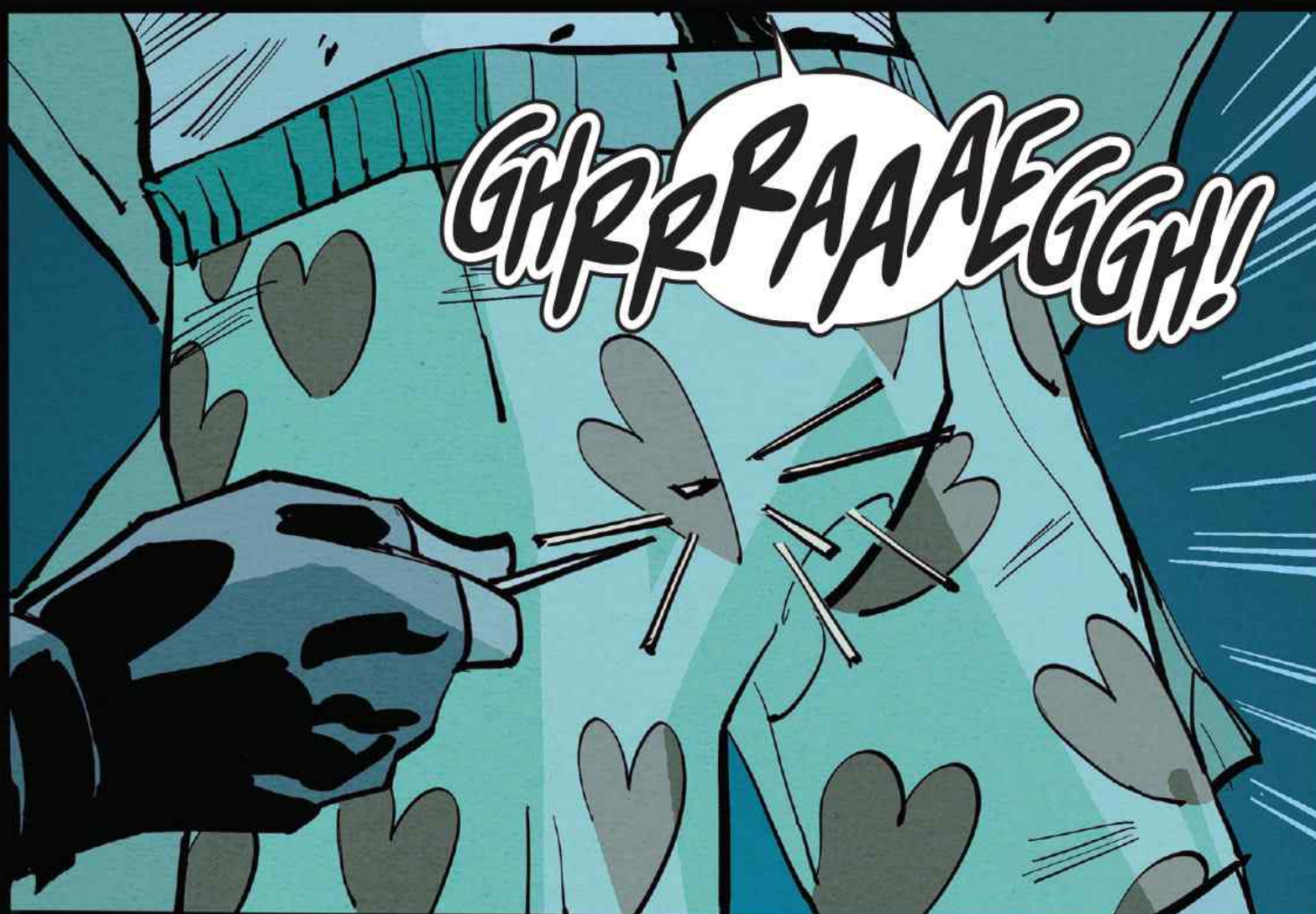
Submabus Ramp.

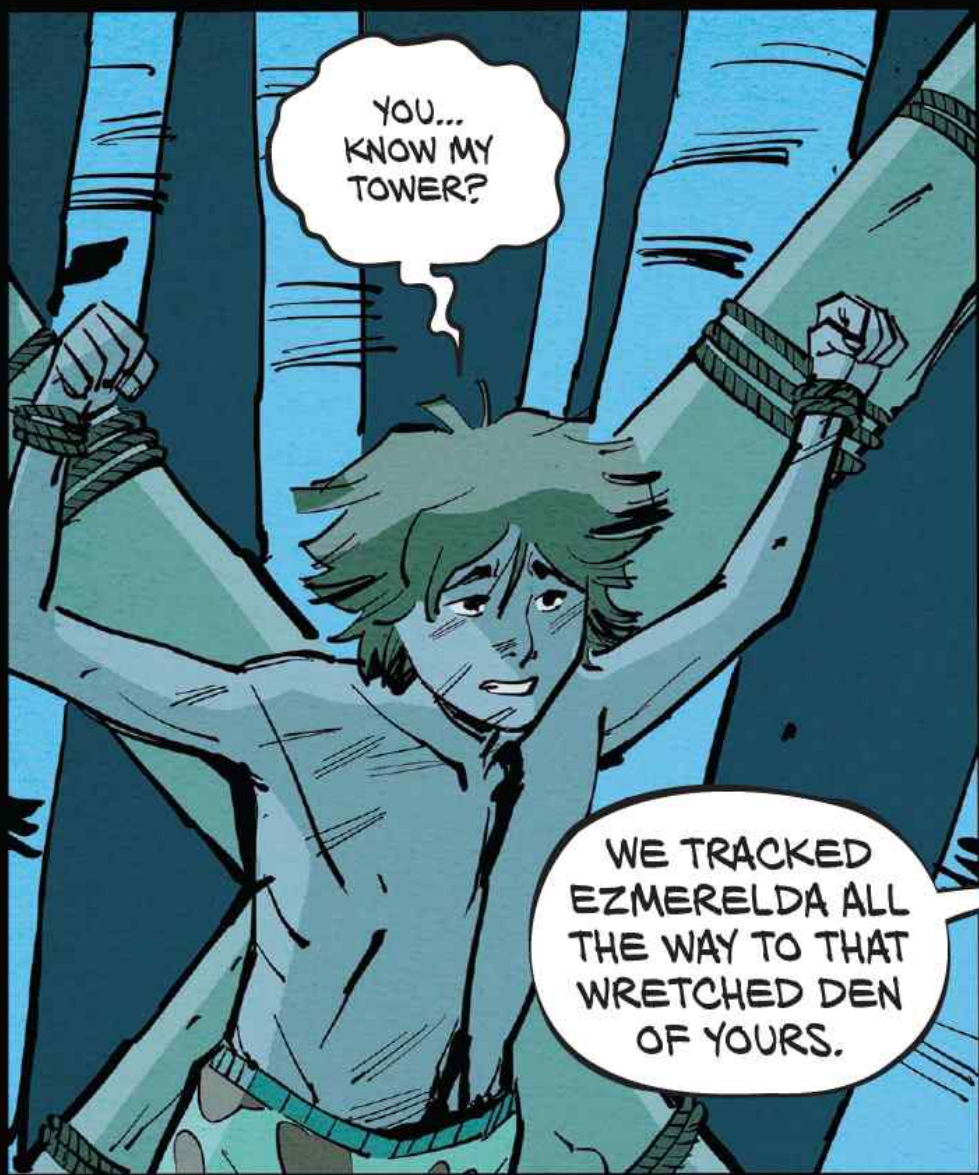
Underwater
Combat Training
Room.



JENNIE











GUUGH!



SHOULD WE
KEEP GOING,
MAW?

LET US
KEEP GOING,
MAW.

SHE'S HEARD HIS
SCREAMS. IT WOULD
SEEM SHE'S STILL
RANGER ENOUGH TO
NOT COME BACK
FOR HIM.



HE'S
NOTHING TO
US NOW.

FEED
HIM TO THE
RATS.



PROVERB
485...THERE
ARE ALWAYS
RATS.

PROVERB
553...ONLY THE
DEAD STAY PUT
IN HOLES.

HOLY MOLY.
IS HE...QUOTING
THE BOOK?

HE MUST'VE
HEARD MEZZY
DOING IT.

THIS IS
BLASPHEMY!
QUICK, SLIT HIS
THROAT!



PROVERB
972...

THE WASTELAND
MUST DECIDE.



DID
HE JUST
SAY...WHAT I
THINK HE
SAID?



When the screams stopped, she stood and waited as long as she dared.

Waited for them to start again.



They did not.



"THINGS MOVE SLOWER WHEN THEY'RE LEAKING."

This she learned from the book.



But still she cried.



And still she carried on.







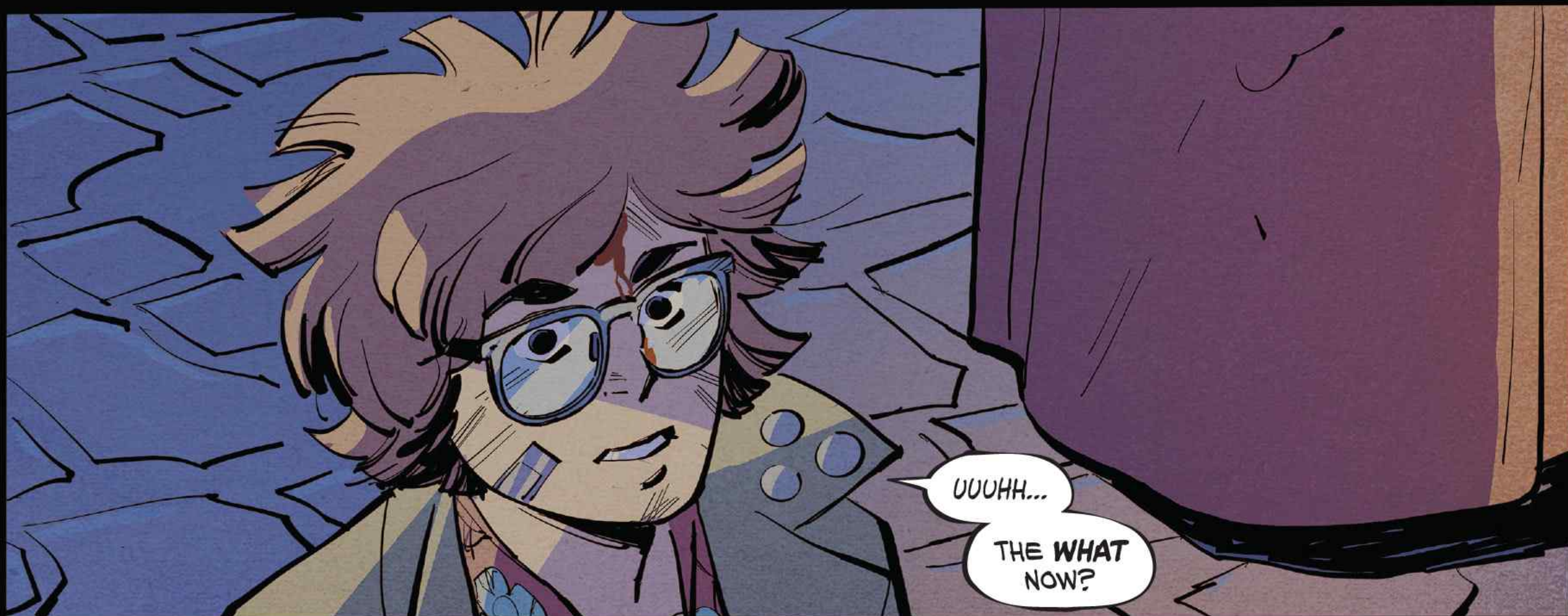
HHHREEEEIINGGH!

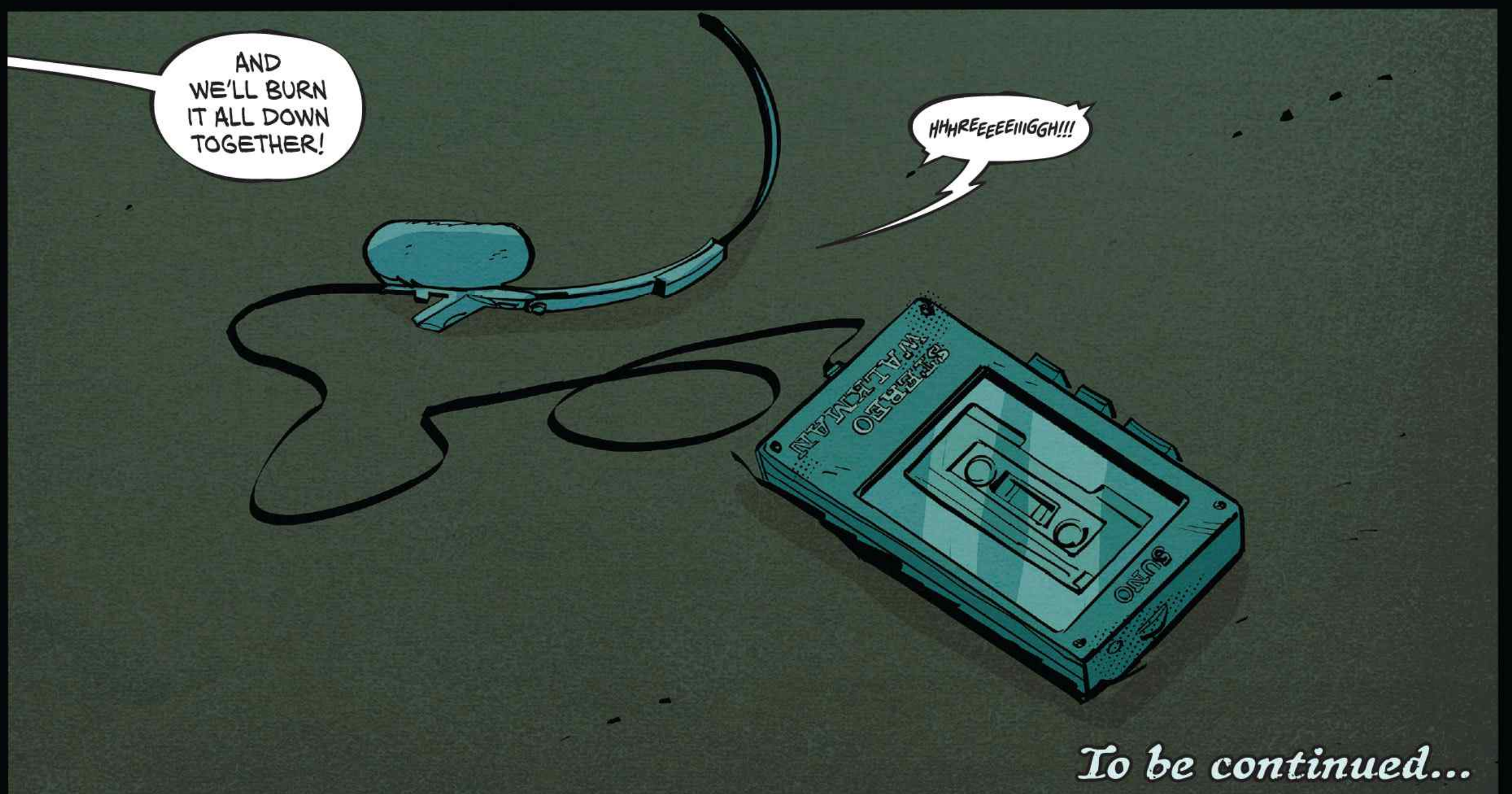


MAW, WE WOKE HIM UP BUT HE WON'T STOP SCREAMING.

HEY, SHUT UP, YOU! THIS IS WHAT YOU ASKED FOR!

YOU MAY NOT BE A RANGER, BOY, BUT YOU SPOKE THE WORDS OF THE BOOK, AND WE ARE BOUND TO HONOR THEM.





To be continued...

Thank you!

MAKING COMIC BOOKS IS A TRULY COLLABORATIVE EFFORT. WE'RE GRATEFUL FOR OUR ENTIRE AMAZING TEAM THAT MADE 2022 OUR BEST YEAR YET, AND ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS:

Adam Yoelin
Alex Lorenzen
Allyson Gronowitz
Amanda Lawson
Amber Peters
Armando Elizondo
Ashley Troub
Bryce Carlson
Caitlin Holland
Caroline Butler
Cheryl Parker
Crystal White
Dafna Pleban
Diane Payne
Elizabeth Brei
Elyse Strandberg
Eric Harburn
Esther Kim
Faizah Bashir

Filip Sablik
Grace Park
Grecia Martinez
Greg Hopkins
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Jason Lee
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Jon Moisan
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Kathleen Wisneski
Kenzie Rzonca
Lance Kreiter
Madison Goyette
Manny Castellanos
Marie Krupina
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Rosalind Morehead
Ryan Matsunaga
Samantha Knapp
Shantel LaRocque
Sierra Hahn
Sophie Philips-Roberts
Stephanie Lazarski
Stephen Christy
Tiffany Thomas
Veronica Gutierrez



SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN...
THIS MONSTER!"

